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The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

Note verbale dated 30 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to annex herewith the reply of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Israeli allegations as stated in document A/56/161-S/2001/673.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 53, 99 and 178 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

* A/56/150.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 30 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 30 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to call your attention to the series of allegations made in the letter dated 6 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to you (A/56/161-S/2001/673).

This letter is part of an aggressive campaign being waged by Israel to mislead world public opinion and obscure the massacres and acts of terrorism it perpetrates on a daily basis against the Palestinian people, whose only offence is to have demanded the most basic human right to exercise self-determination and establish an independent State on its own soil. The letter also seeks to distract attention from Israel's daily violations, on land, at sea and in the air, of Lebanon's territorial integrity and from the two unwarranted acts of aggression that Israeli aircraft committed against positions of the Syrian Arab forces operating in Lebanon, inflicting casualties on them.

As it continues to occupy the Lebanese Shab'a farmlands, Israel argues in its letter that it has withdrawn from southern Lebanon and has implemented Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in full.

Lebanon has declared on all possible occasions that the relevant international covenants give it the right to take action to free its territory of Israeli occupation. At the Arab Summit Conference recently held in Amman, Jordan, the leaders of the Arab States expressed their full support for Lebanon in liberating the Shab'a farmlands. In this context, the Lebanese national resistance is exercising its natural right, as guaranteed by the relevant international covenants, to take action to liberate the remaining Lebanese territory from which Israel has yet to withdraw. This is a right that all of the peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America that have endured occupation have exercised in order to end foreign occupation of their territory, assert their sovereignty and defend the dignity of their people.

It is natural that Syria should support the Lebanese cause, and it is with Lebanon in seeking the restoration of all of its territory. The Israeli Government is fully aware of the fact that Hizb Allah is a Lebanese party that operates in Lebanese territory, enjoys the support of the Lebanese people and does not receive instructions from Syria.

The Lebanese Government has responded to Israeli attempts at deception in many of the letters it has addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It charged Israel with responsibility for inflaming the civil war, just as the international community has held it responsible for the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, the Qana massacre and the destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure. In connection with Syria's role, it must be said that Syrian forces entered Lebanon in response to a request from the legally constituted Lebanese authorities and indeed

preserved the unity of Lebanon's territory and people and quenched the fires of the civil war that Israel had assiduously fanned. Syria has constantly affirmed its commitment to the unity and sovereignty of the land and people of Lebanon, while Israel's violations of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been condemned by the international community in many General Assembly resolutions.

Syria's conduct has always been in full harmony with international law and with respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's resolutions. It has made the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace its strategy. Israel, on the other hand, has scattered millions of Palestinians since 1948, has displaced more than half a million persons as a result of its occupation of the Syrian Golan and has refused to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. It therefore has no right to speak of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Israel is the only State that the United Nations regards as an occupying Power, it is the only one that practices occupation by settlement, and it is the only one that is in flagrant violation of numerous norms of public international law and international humanitarian law. It is the only State that is in violation of dozens of resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and it still refuses to comply with them or to cooperate in any of the efforts being made for their implementation.

Israel's attempts to invert facts and distort positions have not stopped there, and its arrogance has reached the extreme of open and provocative intervention against the consensus position of the Asian Group, which has endorsed the candidature of the Syrian Arab Republic for membership of the Security Council, and against the support this candidature has received. It is well known that, as a member of the Security Council in the periods 1947-1948 and 1970-1971, Syria performed its duties responsibly and with respect for the Charter. Syria is aware that its membership of the Security Council would involve responsible work and a direct contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In closing, we should like to affirm that Syria has opened the door to the peace process in the Middle East and has made a just and comprehensive peace its strategic choice. It will continue its efforts to spare the region from being dragged into a devastating war, one for which the Prime Minister of Israel is planning in order to finish off what remains of the peace process.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 53, 99 and 178 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.